4/10/72

Dear Jerry,

In addition to other mail to which I must attend, other work I must do, I got letters from you, John and Stoner today. From yours I gather you did not go with Stoner. In any event, I want you to read my reply. If you have not read his letter, I quote most of it and all that is relevant. I can't think of a crazier thing he could have done, and if I am aware that he or his secretary may simply have forgotten to seal this letter, I am also aware that even if that were the case this letter might well have been read by others.

I tell you frankly that when you wrote me as you did and I didn't hear from him and then he goes to see James for the first time on more than a year, one of the obvious possibilities I had to consider was that he would not give me these leads and then would persuade or try to persuade James not to. I told this to Bud, and now I'll have to give him a copy of Stoner's letter to me. I will, of course, ask him to keep it confidential and I am sure he will, unless something happens to James. I have no choice at all now. This is just too damned unreasonable and too suspicious. I still don't think Stoner was involved in this, but my obligation is to James, not Stoner, and this presents me with the most critical kind of conflict. Therefore, in James' interest, I must give Bud Stoner's letter and my reply.

Jerry, I am willing to fight the government to help James, and I have. I am willing to go further into debt to help him, as I have, to take time I need for other things. But believe me, I am not going to waste one single minute fighting with him or with Stoner or with anyone else. The simplest thing is for me to spend my time on other things. There are just too many I can't get to. And if anything now happens to James, youxcan be sure Stoner will have to be a prime suspect. No police in the world could avoid this suspicion now, nor can any writer or lawyer.

What John writes makes sense. I will help him in every way I can. I have started some things in motion. They will not be done without his approval. So, I will figure on going there from St. Louis. I have also written him of this, as you say you are. If he wants to see me, there should be no trouble. If they refuse, we will go back to St. L and see whether they have made a mistake. I wrote you about the show with Frank. Now I have a better idea what to expect if he shows up and although it was far short of what it should have been, the admissions I got from him, according to Bud and Jim, who were here yesterday, are good and present us with new possibilities. This guy's big weakness is fact on the killing. He has nothing but what he was fed. So, when he rambles, we shoyld all say get back to the killing, why are you avoiding the killing, things like that. We can talk about this in advance.

I gave Bud the envelope you sent me that was opened and sealed. I think he will pursue it further.

Jerry, please understand me. I am really worried about this insane thing Stoner has done, and I'm not hiding that worry. When I consider his track record in court, with both James and John, even when I make allowances for laziness, if he is lazy, or not preparing a case properly, or not investigating it, when I make all the allowances I can I find he is batting 100% the wrong way and I can't trust his judgement on whether the leads are worthwhile or not. If James gave him what he told me he did, they just can't possibly be of no value. The best two faces I can put on this are first, that Stoner couldn't do it and his ego makes him hide it, and second, that it leads to his friends, and he would hide that. Neither one helps James. This whole situation is very bad. I can't think of anything in his giving me this stuff that could possibly hurt James, either. And I will not ask him or James for this again. Stoner may spin his wheels, but I will not.

Sincerely,